Facilitator Assessment Following A Stepfamily Education Course

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FACILITATOR ASSESSMENT FOLLOWING A STEPFAMILY EDUCATION COURSE

by

Heather Sparks

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF SCIENCE in Family, Consumer, and Human Development

Approved:

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UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

2010
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ABSTRACT

Facilitator Assessment Following a Stepfamily Education Course

by

Heather Sparks, Master of Science

Utah State University, 2010

Major Professor: Scot M. Allgood, Ph.D.
Department: Family, Consumer, and Human Development

The purpose of this study was to evaluate effectiveness of the facilitators of a stepfamily education course, based upon facilitator self-report as well as participant report. Agencies in northern Utah that provide services to low-income minority families were used to recruit a sample of 152 facilitators and 1,134 participants of which 519 of the participants were male and 613 of the participants were females. Additionally, 21 of the facilitators were male and 131 of the facilitators were female. Requirements for participants included having been previously married with no children or having children from a previous relationship that formed a current stepfamily. Intervention theory states the implementation of protective factors, such as preventative education, lessens the impact of risk factors in participants’ lives. A self-report measure was used at the completion of the 12-hour course. Participants and facilitators were asked about the effectiveness of the facilitation with regard to facilitation skills and methods used. Participants and facilitators consistently reported that they did find the facilitation to be
effective. Participants and facilitators agreed that facilitators explained course material clearly, answered questions well, stimulated conversation, cared about group members, and drew upon personal experiences effectively.
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Final thanks are given to my family. First to my husband, Cameron, for never once being actively unsupportive. Second, to my older sister Jessica, who helped me get through both my master's program as well as my thesis. Finally, to my parents and sisters who convinced me this project was not impossible.

Heather Sparks
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter will review the increase of nontraditional families in the United States. Additionally, information regarding family life education programs will be provided. Further, the general philosophy behind intervention theory will be addressed. Finally, the purpose of the current study, which evaluates the effectiveness of facilitators of a stepfamily education course based upon facilitator and participant self-report, will be presented.

Increase in Nontraditional Families

Traditional nuclear families were more prevalent during the 1950s than at any other time in American history (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1988). The 1950s also recorded high marriage rates and low divorce rates (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1988). An increase of nontraditional families rose precipitously in the 1960s as divorce rates increased (Popenoe, 1993).

Currently, the divorce rate in America is nearly two times higher than it was in 1960 (National Marriage Project, 2007). For an average American couple, the chances of a divorce or separation are between 40% and 50%. With nearly half of the marriages in the United States ending in divorce, nontraditional families are becoming increasingly prevalent in our society (Popenoe, 1993).

The number of nontraditional families has increased since the 1950s (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1988). Due to the increase in nontraditional families, more research has
been conducted regarding different aspects of the nontraditional family system (Teachman & Tedrow, 2008). Specific research is conducted regarding the different types of nontraditional families.

One type of nontraditional family is the stepfamily. Stepfamilies are becoming increasingly prevalent in our society (White & Booth, 1985). In 1985, an estimated 35 million adults and 13 million children were members of stepfamilies. The number of reported stepfamilies has continued to increase, as well as the number of children spending at least part of his or her years in a stepfamily (Teachman & Tedrow, 2008). According to a more recent U.S. Census, 23.4 million children were reported as part of a stepfamily (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). As stepfamilies become more prevalent in our society, a greater emphasis is placed on research regarding issues relating to stepfamilies (Teachman & Tedrow, 2008).

Family Life Education Programs

As traditional and nontraditional families change and adapt to their society, information specific to the family is presented through different mediums (Hughes, 1994). One traditional medium used to present information regarding families is the family life education (FLE) programs (Avery & Lee, 1964). The National Council on Family Relations (NCFR, 2006) defined FLE as “the educational effort to strengthen individual and family life through a family perspective.” Similarly, the general purpose behind FLE programs, according to the National Commission on Family Life Education (1968), is to strengthen families.
Although informal FLE programs have existed throughout history, formal FLE programs have only really emerged within the past century (National Council on Family Relations, 2006). Topics of FLE programs are varied and are designed to strengthen families. As each family life education program is specific to the needs of the family it addresses, the development of these programs is an ongoing process (Adler-Baeder, Higginbotham, & Lamke, 2004).

**Stepfamily Education Programs**

Studies researching stepfamily dynamics and systems did not start to really emerge until the late 1980s (Dahl, Cowgill, & Asmundsson, 1987). The results of these studies provided information pertinent to the development of stepfamily education programs. The development of stepfamily education programs is, consequently, a fairly recent phenomenon (National Marriage Project, 2007). These programs cover topics such as communication, problem-solving skills, parenting, stepparenting, and overall education about stepfamilies (Teachman & Tedrow, 2008). As stepfamilies often undergo situations completely different than situations for the traditional family, more information needs to be provided for stepfamilies with regard to specific stepfamily needs (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham, 2004).

The available literature provides information regarding family life education specific to remarriage and stepfamilies. The literature that is available explores the development of family life education programs, parent education programs, and stepparent education programs. Specific to the development of stepparent education
programs, literature exists pertaining to program facilitator attitudes and teaching techniques.

**Facilitators of FLE Programs**

Facilitators of FLE programs have an impact on the perceived effectiveness of the program (Doherty, 1995). Several different facilitator training methods have been studied regarding their impact on the perceived effectiveness of FLE programs (Bowles & Nelson, 1976; Carnine & Fink, 1978; Greer, McCorkle, & Williams, 1989; Koegal, Russo, & Rincove, 1977; Ringer, 1973; Rose & Church, 1998); however, there is limited research the effectiveness of facilitators based upon the skills and methods used by facilitators. Outside the area of FLE, studies indicate communicating course material to group participants and facilitator self-awareness increased perceived facilitator effectiveness (Bird, Hall, Maguire, & Heavy, 1992; Hammonds & Worthington, 1985). Further studies regarding effectiveness of FLE facilitators, specifically with regard to teaching skills and methods, would be beneficial to this field of study.

Although studies exist regarding effectiveness of facilitators of FLE programs, studies assessing the effectiveness of facilitators of stepfamily education programs are virtually nonexistent (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham, 2004). Information on facilitators from other research areas may be applicable to stepfamily facilitators; however, further research is necessary. More research regarding facilitators of stepfamily education programs would be beneficial because it would provide information for facilitators which may allow them to become more effective in teaching stepfamily curricula.
**Intervention Theory**

In order to provide a framework for analysis of a FLE program, theory must be integrated (Wacker, 1998). The use of theory is important when analyzing research as it facilitates competent development of the field, and it is required when applying the results to real-world problems. The development of intervention theory follows these guidelines in that it facilitates development of interventions and it can be applied to real-world problems (Coie et al., 1993).

Part of the definition of a good theory is it makes specific predictions (Wacker, 1998). The overarching purpose of a preventative intervention, or program, is to prevent or moderate dysfunction, based upon a study of potential precursors called risk factors (Coie et al., 1993). A preventative intervention attempts to counteract risk factors and disrupt processes that add to dysfunction.

The current study utilizes intervention theory. The current study uses the *Smart Steps* stepfamily education program (Adler-Baeder, Schramm, Higginbotham, & Paulk, 2007). The *Smart Steps* program targets stepfamilies in Utah who have potential precursors, or risk factors, for dysfunction. Specifically the program is being used to educate low-income, ethnically diverse stepfamilies in Utah. The *Smart Steps* program facilitates education regarding stepfamilies and how to apply that information in a real-world setting.

**Purpose of Current Study**

The current study is part of Higginbotham’s (2006) grant awarded by the U.S.
Department of Health and Human Services. The purpose of this grant is to educate lower-income, ethnically diverse stepfamilies in Utah about healthy marital skills. The *Smart Steps* program (Adler-Baeder et al., 2007) is a stepfamily education program used to help teach these skills.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate effectiveness of the facilitators of a stepfamily education course, based upon facilitator self-report as well as participant report. The current study evaluates effectiveness of facilitator's use of skills and methods in teaching the stepfamily curricula. The current study will add to the field of research regarding effectiveness of FLE facilitators by providing information for facilitators which may allow them to become more effective in teaching FLE curricula to stepfamilies.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Family Life Education

This chapter reviews the ongoing process of FLE program development. The literature presented explores the development of programs and program curriculum specific to stepfamilies. Additionally, the literature focuses on the evaluation of stepfamily education programs. The evaluation process is explored specific to facilitators of FLE courses. The examination leads to research questions regarding the evaluation of facilitators of a stepfamily education program that is connected with a stepfamily education grant in Utah.

Development of Family Life Education Programs

The development of FLE programs is an ongoing process (Adler-Baeder et al., 2004; Hughes, 1994). Clarification of the concept of FLE helps decrease confusion regarding FLE development. Several factors are involved in the FLE development process. These factors include but are not necessarily limited to defining family life education, determining the general purpose of the FLE program, deciding upon the general subject matter or content of the FLE program, and determining effective teaching techniques to utilize during the FLE program (Avery & Lee, 1964; Hughes, 1994; Thomas & Arcus, 1992).

Definition of family life education. Arcus (1987) stated justifying and
evaluating FLE programs is difficult without a concrete definition. A more concrete definition of FLE can help professionals in creating programs (Elliot, 1999). According to Avery and Lee (1964), an adequate definition of FLE programs should include an explanation regarding applicability to the professional field, a meaningful understanding to the lay individual, and be useful for evaluation purposes. Frasier (1967) stated a FLE program definition must delineate for whom, at what stage of development, and the context in which the education is to occur. Building upon these and other definition guidelines, the NCFR (2006) defined FLE as “the educational effort to strengthen individual and family life through a family perspective.”

**General purpose of family life education.** The general purpose behind FLE programs, according to the National Commission on Family Life Education (1968), is to strengthen families. The NCFR is the only group qualified to certify family life educators, and they delineate the objective of FLE as enriching and improving the quality of individual and family life (NCFR, 1984). Thomas and Arcus (1992) modified this definition because Baier (1974) indicated quality of life refers to ensuring basic human needs are met rather than the increase of personal and/or familial satisfaction. Thomas and Arcus concluded the general purpose of FLE programs is to strengthen and enrich individual, marital, and family well-being.

**General subject matter/content of family life education.** Thomas and Arcus (1992) discussed two joint methods for determining whether a particular subject matter would fit under the heading of family life education. The first method used in this study examined the content of a FLE program. The content area is then examined in order to
determine how essential it is for the concept of FLE. The second method is the test for sufficiency. This will help determine whether the content area under examination is sufficiently distinguishable from other related concepts. The use of these two testing methods aids in the development of FLE programs because it helps determine what content areas can be classified and developed within FLE programs.

In addition to the recommendation of Thomas and Arcus (1992), Hughes (1994) recommended the development of content or general subject matter of a particular FLE program should be based upon sound theoretical and research information. Basing the development of the program upon research would allow the program to develop more credibility. Additionally, basing the program upon research would add to the field of study as theory guides research and research clarifies and refines theory (Dilworth-Anderson, Burton, & Klein, 2005).

The research suggests several key components are necessary when developing a FLE program. Though the list is not exhaustive, it includes defining family life education, determining the general purpose of the FLE program, deciding upon the general subject matter or content of the FLE program, and determining effective teaching techniques to utilize during the FLE program.

**Development of Stepfamily Education Programs Curriculum**

With the development of programs for FLE, programs specific to stepfamily education have been and are continuing to be developed. Literature regarding remarried couples, stepfamily dynamics, stepparent-stepchild relationships, and relationships with

Remarried couples. Hetherington and Kelly (2002) discussed stepfamily functioning and its inextricable link to the remarried couple’s functioning. Earlier research by Dahl and colleagues (1987) focused on the marital relationship of the remarried couple and found it is critical for the healthy development of the stepfamily that remarried couples focus on their relationships. Additionally, implications of the Dahl et al. article indicate the remarried couples’ relationships should be given priority, and that it is essential to build relationship strengths in order to reduce marital stress.

Visher and colleagues (2003) conducted clinical observations and looked at empirical research regarding remarried couple and stepfamily dynamics. Findings of the Visher and colleagues study supported the work by Dahl and colleagues (1987). Further information gathered by Visher and colleagues indicated that successful remarried couples understand the differences between first and second marriages.

For continued development of stepfamily education programs Adler-Baeder and Higginbotham (2004) suggested information regarding the couple relationship be included in the program curricula. Additionally, relationship skills-building exercises may benefit remarried couples. Finally, Adler-Baeder and Higginbotham recommended that remarried couples might benefit from participation in general marriage education
Stepfamily dynamics. Bray and Kelly (1998) reported that the first several years of remarriage can be disorderly for the stepfamily. Hetherington and Kelly (2002) found predictable patterns emerged with new stepfamilies, namely one or two years of disorganization, and two to three more years for stabilization. Whitton, Nicholson, and Markman (2008) found successful stepfamilies have realistic expectations regarding the stepfamily dynamics. Finally, Hetherington and Kelly (2002) reported that successful stepfamilies generally utilized respectful behaviors among the stepfamily members.

Ganong and colleagues (1999) conducted a study to examine strategies used by stepparents to develop positive stepfamily dynamics. Participants were 17 stepfamilies in which at least one member of the household was between the ages of 10 and 19. Data were collected using interviews. Results indicated the most successful stepfamily relationships developed slowly.

With regard to stepfamily education program content, Adler-Baeder and Higginbotham (2004) suggested presenting information about relational and developmental differences for stepfamilies. Information regarding predictable dynamic patterns should be presented in the program, as well as information about realistic expectations of stepfamily dynamics.

Stepparent-stepchild relationships. Hetherington and Kelly (2002) suggested establishing a workable relationship between the stepparent and the stepchild in order to establish and maintain a successful stepfamily dynamic. Stepparents who use coercive, and punitive behaviors with stepchildren tend to have negative relationships with those
children (Bray & Kelly, 1998). Successful stepfamily relationships tend to occur when the stepparent takes on a secondary parental role with the stepchild (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002).

Further research shows the child’s acceptance of the stepparent is critical to relationship quality (O’Connor et al., 1997). O’Connor and colleagues examined the nature of relationship influences on child and adult development. Participants in the study included 72 nondivorced and 56 stepfather families. Several raters were used to code different aspects of family relationships. Results of this study indicated family relationships were less connected in stepfamilies as compared to nondivorced families; however, the more accepting a child is of the stepparent, the more successful the stepfamily relationship.

With regard to stepfamily education program content, Adler-Baeder and Higginbotham (2004) suggested providing information regarding the stepparent-stepchild relationships. Specifically, including information about effective stepparenting disciplinary techniques would be beneficial to participants. Finally, including information regarding the acceptance of the stepchild of the stepparent is information that should be provided in a stepfamily education program.

**Relationships with former partners.** The majority of remarriages occur after a divorce rather than the death of a spouse (Buunk & Matsaers, 1999). As such, a highly involved and a highly negative relationship with a former spouse can negatively impact the remarried couple. Establishing appropriate boundaries with a former partner is essential for healthy remarried couples (Weston & Macklin, 1990).
With regard to stepfamily education program content, Adler-Baeder and Higginbotham (2004) suggested providing information on how to promote a successful relationship with a former partner. By helping the program participants understand how to create a businesslike relationship with a former partner, they may be able to prevent or alter prior negative relationship patterns. Skills used by the facilitator help guide the participants toward a better understanding of promoting a successful relationship with former partners, as well as other points in the curriculum.

**Training Facilitators of Family Life Education Programs**

One assumption of stepfamily FLE programs is facilitators have an impact on the perceived effectiveness of the program (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham, 2004). Information regarding the training of FLE program facilitators is critical when assessing the effectiveness of a FLE program. Hughes (1994) suggested adequate training for the FLE instructor as well as a functional presentation style be incorporated into a FLE program. Hughes mentioned the facilitator should consider the audience of the presentation and account for differences in culture and socioeconomic status. Several different studies have evaluated the training procedures specific to the facilitators of FLE programs. Literature regarding different facilitator training techniques includes information about didactic training, modeling, cues, role-playing, and feedback.

**Didactic training for facilitators.** Rose and Church (1998) conducted a review of 27 different studies regarding facilitator training and found that each study used some form of didactic training. The didactic training found in these 27 studies had many
different forms including written material or a manual to be studied, books, articles or papers to be read, study units to complete, or lectures to attend.

A study by Greer and colleagues (1989) researched facilitator, or teacher, training and the impact of the training on the relationship between students and teachers. Teachers of the students were required to read units and pass them at 90% mastery. Additionally, this program provided the teachers with scripted teaching programs. The teachers attended instructional sessions where they learned skills to better teach their students. The results of this study found a strong positive correlation between the number of instructional sessions the teacher attended and the student achievement of learning objectives. The results of this study indicate a strong relationship between the effectiveness of didactic training and participants achieving behavioral objectives.

**Role-play for facilitator training.** A study by Carnine and Fink (1978) researched several different methods of facilitator training, and the effectiveness of each training method. Within this study, one method of facilitator training included the use of role-play. The trainer modeled the desired teaching skill and the trainee then practiced the skill in a role-play situation. In this study the role-play situation produced changes in the trainee behavior. Although the overall effectiveness of the role-play situation is not assessed in this study, Carnine and Fink assumed the role-play activity may have contributed to the overall training procedure.

**Feedback in training facilitators.** One very important teaching technique is feedback (Branch & Paranjape, 2002). Feedback is a method used to improve the performance of targeted behaviors. Generally feedback is characterized in the following
ways: using written notes, graphs, publicly posted graphs, oral comments, lights, discussion of an audiotaped or videotaped performance, and self-evaluation.

Branch and Paranjape (2002) presented one specific form of feedback that could be beneficial to use in a teaching setting—brief feedback. Brief feedback is a succinct method of evaluation, typically involving the use of oral comments, and is a method a teacher might use to provide his or her student with concrete suggestions. The overall success of a FLE class may be influenced by the amount of brief feedback utilized by an instructor.

One study by Koegel and colleagues (1977) investigated the development of training skills necessary to teach autistic children. Within this study, 11 teachers and 12 autistic 5-13 year olds were recorded in a variety of teaching situations. Teacher-training occurred at different times for different teachers. Teacher-training involved modeling as well as feedback regarding the teaching. The results indicated systematic improvement in the child’s behavior only occurred when the teachers had been trained to effectively use the techniques. Additionally, the results of the study indicate practice with feedback is most likely a necessary component of any training program aimed at improving teaching or facilitator skills.

**Evaluating Facilitators**

One study by McCleary and Egan (1989) researched evaluation of course instructors, or course facilitators, for a distance education course. Students enrolled in the course completed a course evaluation for the facilitator following the conclusion of the course. The course evaluation completed by the students used a 7-point scale for
evaluating teaching effectiveness. The results of this study indicated the students found
their instructors, or course facilitator, to be above average at effectiveness in teaching the
course.

Another study by Davis, Nairn, Paine, and Anderson (1992) researched the
effectiveness of course facilitators based upon learning outcomes of small-group teaching
sessions. The sample for this study included 156 second-year students enrolled in a
microbiology course at the University of Michigan Medical School and 11 expert and 10
nonexpert faculty facilitators. At the conclusion of the course, the student’s levels of
knowledge and course satisfaction were measured. The results of this study indicate that
students with the content expert facilitators rated higher on course satisfaction and had
higher examination scores.

**Evaluating Stepfamily Programs**

Evaluation of stepfamily education programs is a critical component toward
assessing the effectiveness of the programs (Hughes, 1994). Higginbotham (2006)
proposed and received a grant for educating ethnically diverse, low-income stepfamilies
about healthy marriage skills in Utah. Included in the proposal was the use of the
existing *Smart Steps* stepfamily education program (Adler-Baeder et al., 2007).

Evaluation of stepfamily education programs must include several aspects of the
program. Program evaluations may examine content, the curriculum implementation
process, the instructional process as well as facilitation (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham,
2004; Hughes, 1994).
Assessing Effectiveness of Facilitators of Stepfamily Education Programs

Studies assessing the effectiveness of facilitators of stepfamily education programs are virtually nonexistent (Geasler & Blaisure, 1998; Whitton et al., 2008). With regard to research pertaining to the effectiveness of stepfamily education programs, evaluative studies are needed. Evaluative research specific to program facilitators is lacking in the majority of studies. Understanding how participants’ knowledge of the facilitator, facilitator teaching strategies, and facilitator influence impact participants helps to better assess the effectiveness of stepfamily education programs.

Participant’s knowledge of facilitator. A general understanding of the program facilitator may have an impact on the effectiveness of a family education program. Corey and Corey (1992) suggested the facilitator publicize his or her educational level and facilitator training experiences. Other studies found recommendation of a program facilitator by a friend or relative was the most influencing factor of a potential participant’s attendance (Duncan, Box, & Silliman, 1996; Levant, 1987). These results of these studies suggest participants are more likely to give credence to a program where the facilitator has either training or a connection to the participant.

Facilitator teaching strategies. With regard to parent education programs, Arbuthnot, Poole, and Gordon (1996) pointed out that facilitator use of skill-oriented teaching techniques are more effective with regard to parental behavioral change than lectures or the use of books; however, facilitator use of workbooks in FLE parenting programs has shown positive results. Additionally, Leek (1992) suggested clinical evidence supports facilitator use of skill-based educational interventions. Leek also
suggested structured skill-based intervention programs help parents learn to more
effectively communicate and function successfully as coparents.

**Facilitator influence.** Studies evaluating the facilitator influence in stepfamily
education programs are sparse (Whitton et al., 2008). Although additional information
regarding facilitator influence in group settings would be beneficial, much of the current
research has neglected to examine this area of family life education. Several older
studies briefly address the impact of facilitator influence in a group education setting.

Knowles (1980) suggested in an educational situation involving adult learners that
the leader or facilitator has a substantial influence on the learning climate. Additionally,
Thomas and Arcus (1993) suggested facilitators are often primarily responsible for
designing, implementing, and interpreting the evaluation of outcomes from a FLE
program. As a result, Thomas and Arcus suggested the association between program
success and facilitator effectiveness is strong. Ooms and Wilson (2004) stated facilitator
quality is key to program success. Also suggested was facilitators working with low-
income populations need to be genuine, caring, respectful, and positive role models for
their participants (Ooms & Wilson, 2004).

One study by Hammonds and Worthington (1985) researched the effect of
facilitator utterances on participant responses. Participants were either placed in a marital
enrichment discussion group or an assessment-only control group. The marital
enrichment group was videotaped and coded. Facilitator statements and participant
verbal responses were analyzed using either the Heckel Classification System or the Hill
Interaction Matrix. Results of the study indicate participant verbal responses tended to
follow the same ideas as facilitator utterances. The results of this study also indicate a relationship between facilitator suggestions and participant compliance.

A more recent study examines the degree to which facilitator characteristics and attributes can be used to predict participant ratings of facilitators and the overall program quality (Higginbotham & Myler, 2010). The sample included 598 participants of the Smart Steps stepfamily education course gathered between January 2007 and July 2008. Data were collected at the end of each class using a questionnaire designed to gather information about the course experience and facilitation. The results of this study indicate quality facilitation means more to participants than comparable demographic characteristics or life experiences. Although information from the participant perspective is helpful in the evaluation process of FLE programs, information from the perspective of both facilitator and participant would be beneficial because it would aid in program development.

**Conclusion**

The development of stepfamily education programs is an ongoing process. Specific to the development of stepparent education programs, literature regarding program facilitator attitudes and teaching techniques indicated facilitator's have an influence on the program. Although some information exists regarding the use of facilitator teaching techniques in FLE programs, more information would be beneficial to the field. Little to no research exists regarding perceived effectiveness of facilitators. Being able to compare perceived facilitation experiences from the perspective of both the facilitator as well as the participant would improve the FLE evaluation process.
**Purpose and Objective**

The current study is part of Higginbotham’s (2006) grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The purpose of this grant is to educate lower-income, ethnically diverse stepfamilies in Utah about healthy marital skills. The stepfamily course, *Smart Steps* (Adler-Baedeker, 2001), was presented in this study by facilitators. Participants were given opportunities to provide feedback regarding facilitators. The purpose of this study was to see if there was a difference in opinion regarding the effectiveness of program facilitation between the participants and the facilitators based upon the variables of effectiveness in material presentation and session management.

**Research Questions**

1. Do the participants and facilitators differ in their perception of whether the facilitator explained the course material and effectively stimulated participation?

2. Do the participants and facilitators differ in their perception of whether the facilitator offered support and encouragement during the program?

3. Do the participants and facilitators differ in their perception of whether the facilitator draws on his or her own experiences in an appropriate and effective way?
CHAPTER III

METHODS

The current study was part of a larger study by Higginbotham (2006) *Teaching Healthy Marriage Skills to Ethnically Diverse, Low-Income Couples in Stepfamilies*. The study was funded as part of the Healthy Marriage Initiative (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2008). The larger study evaluated effectiveness of stepfamily education courses in a variety of different areas. The current study was specifically interested in the evaluation of the facilitators of the stepfamily education course.

**Design**

The design used to evaluate the facilitators of the stepfamily education course was an exploratory descriptive design. Exploratory descriptive research is conducted when an examination of the literature fails to provide significant information in the area of study (Dooley, 2001). Additionally, a descriptive design is used to provide descriptions of the variables in order to answer the research question.

A descriptive design was used to assess participant and facilitator evaluation of the stepfamily education course. The limited research on facilitator evaluations of FLE programs, specifically stepfamily education programs, necessitates further evaluation of the facilitators of stepfamily education programs (Arbuthnot et al., 1996).

**Sample**

The sample for this study included 94 facilitators and 1,136 participants of the
The Smart Steps program recruited from 12 agencies throughout Utah. These agencies included the Layton Family Connection Center, Child Family Support Centers in Logan, Box Elder County, Taylorsville, and Ogden. Additionally, Head Start agencies including OWCAP, Kids on the Move, Southern Utah University, Bear River Head Start, Salt Lake CAP Head Start, and Centro de familia. The project is a government funded project intended to provide stepfamily education classes at no cost to the participants. As this grant targets lower income and underserved populations, these agencies provide services for lower income and minority individuals, including parenting classes, respite nursery, therapy, and head start services.

The stepfamily courses were offered in both Spanish and English. To be part of the study, an inclusion criterion for participants was that they were part of a remarriage or stepfamily, with either one or both of the spouses having had children with a former partner. Additionally, if possible both partners would need to attend at least five of the six classes offered. If both of the partners were unable to attend at least five classes, than at least one partner had to attend at least five classes. Facilitators of the Smart Steps program attend a one-day required training seminar. At the seminar, the facilitators learned teaching skills, how to lead discussions, appropriate confidentiality measures, as well as training on stepfamilies.

Measures

The Facilitator Questionnaire (Higginbotham, 2006) is a 22-item self-report questionnaire that includes 16 multiple choice and 6 fill-in-the-blank items (see Appendix
A). This questionnaire is designed to measure facilitator demographic information, class format information, and facilitator experience. The questionnaire is divided into three sections; section C of the questionnaire was used in this study. Section C is designed to measure information about the facilitator experience facilitating the class and has five questions. An example of a specific question from Section C is, “Participants would say that I (as the facilitator) explained the course material clearly and answered questions well.” Another example is, “Participants would say that I (as the facilitator) was effective in stimulating participation.” Content validity was established for this questionnaire using a panel of experts from the field of family life education who have expertise in the area of stepfamily education.

The Class Evaluation Forms (Higginbotham, 2006) include six forms, one form for each lesson (see Appendix B). Each form consists of 15 multiple choice items and is a self-report questionnaire used to assess information about stepfamilies before and after the course as well as facilitation of the course. Additionally, each form has two fill-in-the-blank items for questions regarding useful information provided in that lesson as well as suggestions for making the class more helpful. Construct validity was established for this questionnaire using a panel of experts from the field of family life education who have expertise in the area of stepfamily education.

This study measured skills related to teaching the course, such as explaining course material, stimulating participation, and time management in session. This study also looked at teaching skill used by facilitators, such as offering support to participants and drawing on personal experiences appropriately in session. To measure the different
skills and teaching methods incorporated by the facilitators, the questionnaire was given to the facilitators and used a 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree or disagree, agree, or strongly agree). The questionnaire specifically asked whether the participants would say that the facilitator explained course material clearly, whether the facilitator was effective in stimulating participation, and whether the facilitator managed the time and flow of sessions effectively. Additionally, the questionnaire asked whether the facilitator offered support and encouragement during the program. A final question reviewed from this questionnaire was whether the facilitator drew on his or her own experiences in an appropriate and effective way. The data gathered from these questionnaires was used to help determine facilitator effectiveness in teaching the program (see the results).

**Procedures**

The sample was recruited through 12 Utah agencies that offer services to low-income and minority individuals. These agencies offer many different services for the community, such as parenting classes, respite nursery, therapy, and head start services. The majority of individuals served by these agencies are lower income.

In order to provide the stepfamily education course, each agency was contracted $20,000 each year on a cost-reimbursable basis, allowing $10,000 to be spent on each of the two stepfamily education courses held. The money provided each agency was to be used at the discretion of the agency within the following areas: personnel, operating expenses, overhead, and other. Under the personnel category, money could be dispersed
to pay for salaries and benefits. Under the operating expenses category, money could be used to pay for travel, supplies, participant incentives, printing, and advertising.

Participants attended a course taught once a week for 2 hours at a time for a total of six weeks. Upon completion of the 12-hour course, participants attended a booster session 4 to 6 weeks later. Each agency required a minimum of at least seven stepfamily couples to attend all of the sessions in order to present the course. An informed consent was provided to the participants of the program which stated participants could discontinue the program at anytime. The project was approved by Utah State University’s Institutional Review Board (see Appendix C).
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

This study focuses on the perceived effectiveness of facilitators facilitating a stepfamily education program. Three research questions were used to determine whether participants and facilitators reported the facilitators as effective. On measurements that contained more than one question, reliability analyses were conducted prior to scores being calculated. The two questionnaire questions examined for research question one (explaining course material and stimulating participation) fit the criteria for a reliability analysis. Internal consistency analysis produced a Chronbach’s alpha coefficient of .897. This alpha level is appropriate for social statistics (Leary, 2004). To avoid type I errors, a .05 alpha level was selected which also allowed for maintenance of a 95% confidence interval.

Research Question 1

The first question assessed whether the facilitator explained the course material and effectively stimulated participation. Two 5-point Likert scale questions were used to address this question and the scores were added together. The questions were combined in the analysis because there was a statistically significant correlation between these two questions at the .001 level of significance. Descriptive statistics were used to find mean responses of participants and facilitators to determine if there were differences based upon class role—whether facilitator or participant (Leary, 2004). Participants and facilitators means were less than 1 point away from the total score possible (see Table 1).
Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Questions Regarding Facilitator Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Facilitator</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator explained material and stimulated participation</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>8.89</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>612</td>
<td>9.20</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>8.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1,132</td>
<td>9.06</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>8.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator cared about the group</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>614</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>4.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1,130</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>4.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator used own experiences</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>613</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>4.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1,132</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>4.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was also conducted to evaluate the relationship of gender and class role (participant/facilitator) with perceptions of facilitation. The ANOVA is a statistical procedure used to compare means simultaneously from two conditions (Leary, 2004). There was not a statistically significant interaction effect. There was a statistically significant main effect for the class role, being facilitator or participant, as identified within this analysis (see Table 2).

The perception of effective facilitation for explaining course material did not show a significant difference based on gender but there was a significant difference based on class role, either the facilitator or participant (see Table 1). As evidenced by the totaled means in Table 1, there was almost a 1 point difference between participant perceptions and facilitator perceptions.
Table 2

**Research Question 1: Analysis of Variance for Facilitator Explanation of Course Material and Cared About the Group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class role (CR)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31.46</td>
<td>23.52</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (G)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CR x G</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>1,280</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1,284</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Question 2**

The second question examined whether the facilitator offered support and encouragement during the program. One five-point Likert scale question was used to attend to this research question. Responses for participants and facilitators were again totaled and means were calculated (see Table 1). Participants and facilitator means were roughly a half point away from the total score possible. These means indicated that the participants and facilitators did report the facilitator cared about the group during the program (see Table 1).

In addition to the descriptive statistics, a two-way ANOVA was used to analyze gender and class role among participant and facilitator responses with regard to the facilitator offering support and encouragement during the program. The main effect for gender and class role was statistically significant (see Table 3).

This suggested that the facilitation experience, with regard to support and encouragement offered from the facilitator, was different for male and females as well as
Table 3

Research Question 2: Analysis of Variance for Facilitator Caring About the Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class role (CR)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>8.16</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (G)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CR x G</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>1,276</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1,280</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

facilitators and participants. The data suggested facilitators rated themselves lower on this question than participants. The data also suggested females rated the facilitators with higher scores than males. There were no other statistically significant differences found in this analysis.

Research Question 3

The final research question was interested in whether the facilitator drew on personal experiences in an appropriate and effective way, with regard to teaching. One 5-point Likert scale question was used to attend to this research question. Responses for participants and facilitators were again totaled and means were calculated. Participants and facilitator means were roughly less than one point away from the total score possible. These mean scores indicated that the participants and facilitators did report the facilitator drew on personal experiences in an appropriate and effective way during the program.
(see Table 1).

In addition to the descriptive statistics, a two-way ANOVA was used to analyze gender and class role among participant and facilitator responses with regard to the facilitator drawing on personal experiences in an appropriate and effective way. The main effect for gender and the interaction between gender and class role was not statistically significant. The main effect for class role was statistically significant as identified within this analysis (see Table 4).

This main effect for class role suggested the perception of effective facilitation, with regard to drawing upon personal experiences, was not significantly influenced by gender but was significantly influenced by class role.

Table 4

*Research Question 3: Analysis of Variance for Facilitator Using Personal Experiences*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class role (CR)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.01</td>
<td>11.09</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (G)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CR x G</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>1,279</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1,283</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

This study utilized three research questions to determine perceived effectiveness of facilitators facilitating a stepfamily education program. Attention was given to intervention theory, relating to its preventative factors and program implementation. Implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research based on the study’s findings were also taken into consideration and provided in this chapter.

Research Question 1

The purpose of the first research question was to explore whether the facilitator explained the course material and effectively stimulated participation. Means of both participants and facilitators were less than one point away from the highest score possible. These ratings indicated that both participants and facilitators had similar impressions regarding facilitation skills including explaining course material and stimulating participation.

The findings in this study are consistent with previous studies (Bird et al., 1992; Hammonds & Worthington, 1985; Ooms & Wilson, 2004). As Ooms and Wilson (2004) stated regarding evaluation of FLE programs, facilitator quality is key to program success. As the participant’s rankings in this study indicated facilitator quality on facilitation skills, the facilitation may have impacted the overall program success.

Additional explanations exist regarding the mean scores of participants and facilitators being less than one point away from the highest score possible. One
explanation is participants really enjoyed the class curricula. Some literature is available to support this explanation of the high mean scores for participants (Visher et al., 2003). The study by Visher and colleagues indicated successful remarried couples gained a better understanding of their remarriage situation, through different course curricula.

One further explanation as to the mean scores of participants and facilitators being less than one point away from the highest score possible is the rapport that existed between facilitators and participants. If the facilitators were able to have a good rapport with the participants of the program, those involved in that program may have been more inclined to rate their experience positively. Some literature exists to support this explanation of rapport being a reason for the mean scores (Hammonds & Worthington, 1985). The results of a study by Hammonds and Worthington indicated a strong positive relationship between the facilitator and the participant increased participant compliance, as well as the participant’s overall program rating.

The findings of this study indicate a significant effect for class role. Several possible explanations exist as to why there was a significant effect for these two groups. Self-report bias, or social-desirability bias, could have influenced the ratings of facilitators, which were somewhat lower than the ratings of the participants. Facilitators may have expected their answers to be reviewed which could have resulted in a social-desirability bias (Leary, 2004). Self-report bias could have also influenced the somewhat higher ratings of the participants. Rapport developed between the facilitator and participants could have also resulted in a social-desirability bias (Leary, 2004).

A variety of factors could have influenced the ratings by all participants for
facilitation skills, such as self-report bias or sampling bias. The different facilitation styles allowed for an appeal to different learning styles. Appealing to different learning styles could have influenced the participants’ perceptions of how well the facilitator explained the course material and effectively stimulated participation.

**Research Question 2**

The second research question assessed whether the facilitator offered support and encouragement during the program. Participants and facilitator means were roughly a half point away from the total score possible. These mean scores indicated that the participants and facilitators did report the facilitator offered support and encouragement during the program. The findings are consistent with previous studies regarding facilitator effectiveness (Davis et al., 1992; Higginbotham & Myler, 2010; McCleary & Egan, 1989).

The findings of this study relates to the study by Higginbotham and Myler (2010), whose study indicated facilitator characteristics and attributes can be used to predict participant ratings of facilitators and the overall program quality. The current findings from this study provide further information regarding participant and facilitator ratings of facilitators. The current findings indicate that facilitator effectiveness was rated higher by the participants than the facilitators.

The findings of the current study relate to the study by McCleary and Egan (1989). The results of the study by McCleary and Egan (1989) indicated that students, or participants, of a course evaluate their course facilitator to be above average in teaching
the course, and consequently rate them effective in teaching the course. The results of
the current study indicate that participants rate facilitators as effective in teaching the
course.

The findings of the current study also relate to the study by Davis and colleagues
(1992) in that participants of a course rated facilitators higher in overall course
satisfaction. The results of the Davis and colleagues study indicated that students with
the content expert facilitators rated higher on course satisfaction than students who had
non-content expert facilitators. The results of the current study indicate that participants
rate facilitators as effective in teaching the course.

Overall facilitators ranked themselves lower than the participants. Also of note,
there was no statistically significant difference in the facilitator rated questions based
upon gender. The current findings from this study add further support to assessment of
facilitator facilitation skills and the implications the facilitation skills have on overall
program assessment.

Research Question 3

Research question three was interested in whether the facilitator drew on personal
experiences in an appropriate and effective way, with regard to teaching. Participants
and facilitator means were roughly less than one point away from the total score possible.
These means indicated that the participants and facilitators did report the facilitator drew
on personal experiences in an appropriate and effective way during the program.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous studies regarding facilitator
effectiveness (Duncan et al., 1996; Levant, 1987). Duncan and colleagues concluded participants are more likely to have confidence in a FLE program when they are able to create a connection with their program facilitator. Levant indicated when the facilitator has either training or a tie to the participant, the participant is more likely to give the program a higher rating.

The findings of the current study have some practical implications. One implication of the findings that facilitators drew on personal experiences in an appropriate and effective way during the program deals with the overall effectiveness of the program. If the participants are able to feel a tie to the facilitator, they may be able to learn more from the program than if they did not feel a tie with the facilitator. A future study could examine how well the material was learned by the participant and examine how well the participant felt connected to the facilitator.

Another implication of this study deals with program assessment based upon the facilitation of the program. Future programs may examine assessing the effectiveness of the facilitation of the program when attempting to assess the overall success of the program. In so doing, the continued development of education programs may include different facilitation strategies in an attempt to make the course more successful.

**Intervention Theory**

Intervention theory discusses the interaction between risk factors and protective factors (Coie et al., 1993). Risk factors may include poverty, low-income, and limited access to educational resources (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham, 2004). Protective
factors include factors aimed at increasing resistance to risk factors (Coie et al., 1993). FLE programs can serve as protective factors (Visher et al., 2003). The stepfamily education program used in the current study, Smart Steps (Adler-Baeder et al., 2007), was designed to educate and apply the use of protective factors in stepfamilies.

Intervention theory also states preventative programs should target "high risk" populations, such as lower-income and minority (Coie et al., 1993). As it can be difficult to gain participants from "high risk" populations, the current study used agencies that already provided services to lower-income and minority individuals. The findings from the three research questions provided information regarding effectiveness of teaching protective factors reported by participants from “high risk” population. Participants consistently reported facilitation of the program curricula, specifically the facilitator's methods and skills used to teach the program, were effective. The protective factors, factors aimed at increasing resistance to risk factors, taught by facilitators in this program may be able to serve as moderators to risk factors. Although the findings of this study do not indicate how the information taught by facilitators can serve as moderators to risk factors, the results of this study do indicate that the methods and skills employed by facilitators were effective in teaching the curricula. As the curricula itself can be considered a moderator to risk factors, the results of this study could be considered supportive of intervention theory.

Intervention theory provided a valuable framework to guide this study. Protective factors, in this case the information regarding stepfamily education, seem to have been presented to the “high risk” participants of the stepfamily program. Facilitators were
found to be effective by both participants and facilitators.

**Application**

Findings from this study provide implications for FLE. There is currently limited information regarding the effectiveness of facilitators of FLE programs. The current study provides more information regarding the effectiveness of facilitators of a FLE program. The findings are consistent with previous studies regarding facilitator effectiveness (Higginbotham & Myler, 2010; Thomas & Arcus, 1993). As FLE programs develop, family life educators should think about the impact of program facilitation for program assessment.

As intervention theory suggested, increasing protective factors to mediate risk factors helps meet the need of participants of FLE programs (Coie et al., 1993). The Smart Steps program taught implementation of protective factors (Adler-Baeder et al., 2007). Participants reported facilitation of the Smart Steps program, specifically the skills and methods used to facilitate, were determined to be of use when teaching the program. Developing programs related to implementing protective factors should focus on participant needs and how to address those needs using effective facilitation. When the participant feels a connection with the facilitator, they can have more confidence in the program and may give more credence to the material presented (Duncan et al., 1996). The use of effective facilitation can increase the knowledge base of the participants in the course, which could be viewed as implementation of a protective factor.

Addressing the needs of high-risk participants is challenging when attempting to
identify and recruit high risk participants. Reaching high-risk populations can be challenging. Identifying and recruiting high-risk participants in this study was possible using northern Utah agencies providing services for lower income minority residents. Increasing participation in the program was aided by providing childcare, meals, and monetary incentives upon completion of the program.

Engaging participation once the high risk participants were in the program was the responsibility of facilitators, and using different skills and methods by facilitators helped engage the participants. The results of the current study emphasize the importance of facilitators engaging the participants of the program. FLE educators and program developers should consider necessary steps to encourage participation from high risk populations that would benefit from the program curricula.

**Limitations and Recommendations**

When interpreting the results of this study, limitations should be taken into account. Descriptive statistics were utilized because of the limited information regarding evaluation of facilitators and stepfamily education programs (Leary, 2004). The purpose of a descriptive design is to describe thoughts and opinions of a defined population. As a descriptive design was utilized in this study, no comparison group or control group was implemented. Although each facilitator used the same program curricula, facilitation skills varied between facilitators which would make the implementation of a control group and a comparison group challenging.

Another limitation of this study is attrition. Although attrition was not as
significant of a problem within the current study, some attrition did occur. At the conclusion of the 12-hour program, some participants neglected to complete the participant questionnaire which was a procedural limitation.

Another limitation of this study is the population. The population was not randomly selected for this study. The sample for this study included low-income minority stepfamilies and facilitators of the Smart Steps program selected from agencies in northern Utah. The sample was predominately Caucasian and Latino and other cultures were underrepresented in the sample. Whitton and colleagues (2008) mentioned the importance of providing education for a variety of family types, cultures, and socioeconomic status because they will each have different reactions to education. Further research regarding facilitators of stepfamily education programs should include a more diverse cultural base.

Another limitation of this study involves data collection procedures. The data collection procedures included self-report measures for both program participants and facilitators. Social desirability bias may have influenced responses from participants and facilitators. To control for social desirability bias respondents were assured their responses were anonymous.

Another limitation is that the current study only provides immediate self-report information at the conclusion of the 12-hour course. By implementing a longitudinal type design following an education course it could produce long-term outcomes regarding participant views of facilitation. Implementing a self-report questionnaire regarding overall program facilitation at the conclusion of a booster session following a
FLE course could also provide further information regarding program facilitation.

**Implications for Future Research**

The current study provides implications for future research for stepfamily education with regard to facilitators. The results of this study indicate that overall facilitators ranked themselves lower than participants. Future research could be conducted to better understand the lower scores facilitators gave themselves. Future research could also be conducted that could take into account social desirability bias, and control for that factor. Further, a study in which facilitators ranked each other could also provide insight into the lower ranking scores of the facilitators of this study.

The current study provides implications for future research for stepfamily education with regard to the gender of participants. The results of this study indicate the female participants overall ranked the facilitators higher than the male participants. Future research could attempt to control for gender differences in order to better understand this result.

The current study provides implications for future research for educators. Understanding the differences between students and teacher perceptions of teacher teaching skills can help educators better understand teaching techniques. By helping educators gain a better understanding of what skills utilized they perceive as effective in teaching a curricula, and what skills their students perceive as effective, will help educators become more effective in teaching.

Another implication of this study on future research impacts marital therapy. A
possible future study could aid therapists to become more effective with his or her therapeutic techniques. A study researching the perceptions of a therapist’s perceived effective therapy skills and the client's perception of the therapist's therapy skills would be beneficial. The information gained from this study could be utilized in many different areas. The information gained from this potential study could be taught to training therapists, as well as current therapists. The information could help therapists create a stronger therapeutic alliance with their clients, which could impact the progression of therapy.

**Summary**

Despite limitations inherent in this study, the information provided by this study is helpful when considering the implementation of facilitation skills as well as contributing to the limited literature on facilitation of FLE programs. Participants and facilitators of this study reported facilitation skills and methods were effective in teaching the program curricula. This encourages educators provide more emphasis on the facilitation aspect of FLE programs.
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Two-way interactive television. *American Journal of Distance Education, 3*(1), 50-60.


CA: Sage.


APPENDICES
Appendix A

Facilitator Questionnaire
Facilitator Questionnaire
(To be completed at the end of the final class)

IN ADDITION TO THE INFORMATION BEING GATHERED FROM YOUR CLASS PARTICIPANTS WE ARE ALSO INTERESTED IN INFORMATION/FEEDBACK FROM YOU. PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ABOUT YOURSELF AND THE CLASS YOU TOOK AS HONESTLY AND ACCURATELY AS POSSIBLE. THERE ARE NO “RIGHT” ANSWERS AND YOUR RESPONSES WILL REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL.

PART A. QUESTIONS ABOUT YOU:

1. Age ______

2. Sex  □ Male  □ Female

3. Please indicate your ethnic background: (check only one)
□ African-American  □ Asian-American  □ Caucasian  □ Hispanic/Latino
□ Native American  □ Bi-Racial  □ Unknown  □ Other: ______

4. What is your current occupation? (e.g. therapist, case manager)_________________________

5. How many years of experience do you have working professionally with families?______

6. What is your present relationship status? (check only one)
□ First marriage  □ Engaged to be married for the first time
□ Remarried  □ Engaged to be remarried
□ In a couple relationship (never been married)
□ In a couple relationship (divorced/widowed)
□ Single (I’m not in a couple relationship)
□ Other: ___________________________

7. Do you or your current spouse/partner have stepchildren? □ Yes □ No

8. Growing up, did you ever live in a stepfamily? □ Yes □ No

9. Have you ever taken a formal class/course on stepfamily or remarriage development? □ Yes □ No

10. What is your level of education (check only one):
□ No formal education  □ Completed trade or technical school
□ Some grade school  □ Some college
□ Completed grade school  □ 4 year college degree completed
□ Some high school  □ Some graduate school or professional school
□ Completed high school or GED  □ Post-graduate or professional degree completed
□ Some trade or technical school

11. Please indicate what (if any) degrees, credentials, or licenses you hold:_____________________

PART B. QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR CLASS

1. What were the dates of your classes? ____________________________

2. What format did you use?
□ 6 weekly two-hour sessions
□ 2 six-hour Sessions
□ One day (e.g. Saturday)
□ Other ____________________________
3. Did you hold your classes at a location other than your agency location?
   □ Yes  □ No  If yes, where?

4. Did you have a co-facilitator?  □ Yes  □ No

5. How did you advertise/recruit participants for your class? (check all that apply)
   □ Flyers
   □ Paid newspaper ads
   □ Free newspaper ads
   □ Paid radio ads
   □ Free radio ads
   □ Television
   □ Other (Please specify):

   □ Phone calls to past clients
   □ Phone calls to current clients
   □ Mailings to past clients
   □ Mailings to current clients
   □ Personal invitations to current clients
   □ Word of mouth

6. At what locations did you advertise/recruit couples for your class? (check all that apply)
   □ Local schools
   □ Referring agencies
   □ Other (Please specify):

   □ Within your own agency
   □ Churches

7. How much did you spend on advertising/recruiting?  $______

8. What did you do for incentives?
   □ Books
   □ Gift Cards $______
   □ Other (Please specify):

   □ Cash for each session $______
   □ Cash for completing the course $______

9. Overall, how much did you spend on incentives?  $______

PART C. QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE FACILITATING CLASSES

| 1. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about your class participants and the classes themselves. |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| A. The participants would say that I (as the facilitator) explained the course material clearly and answered questions well. |
| B. The participants would say that I (as the facilitator) was effective in stimulating participation. |
| C. The participants would say that I (as the facilitator) cared about group members and offered support and encouragement during the program. |
| D. The participants would say that I (as the facilitator) managed the time and flow of the sessions effectively. |
| E. The participants would say that I (as the facilitator) drew upon my own experiences in an appropriate and effective way. |
| F. The program was relevant and useful to participants. |
| G. The meeting site was accessible to participants. |
| H. The facilities were comfortable. |
| I. The length and time of sessions fit well with participant's work/family schedule. |
| J. The program was what participants expected. |
| K. Participants learned knowledge and skills about healthy relationships. |
| L. Participants will recommend this program to friends. |
Appendix B

Class Evaluation Lesson Six
CLASS EVALUATION
Lesson Six
Building Family Strengths

Name: ______________________ Site (location): ______________________
(Please Print)

Date: ______________________ Teacher(s): ______________________

Please help us evaluate our program by answering a few questions about the class you participated in and the facilitator(s). This information will help us know if the program is meeting its objectives and will help us make improvements. Your feedback will remain confidential and will not be seen by your facilitator.

PART A: Please mark the response that reflects what you knew BEFORE and now AFTER attending this class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Was Poor</th>
<th>Was Fair</th>
<th>Was Good</th>
<th>Was Excellent</th>
<th>Is Poor</th>
<th>Is Fair</th>
<th>Is Good</th>
<th>Is Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My knowledge of the effects of stress.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. My awareness of how to handle stress.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My ability to identify individual and family strengths.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PART B: Please mark the response that reflects the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The facilitator(s) explained the course material clearly and answered questions well.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The facilitator(s) was effective in getting people to participate.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The facilitator(s) cared about group members and offered support and encouragement.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The facilitator(s) managed the time well.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The facilitator(s) drew upon his/her own experiences in ways that were helpful.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The facilities were comfortable.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The handouts and activities were helpful.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The information in the class was useful to me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Attending this class was a good experience.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I have learned new knowledge and skills.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part C. What are the two most useful things you learned today?

1._____________________________________________________________________

2._____________________________________________________________________

Part D. Do you have any suggestions to make this class more helpful and/or enjoyable? (more space on back)
Appendix C

IRB Approval
MEMORANDUM

TO: Scot Allgood
    Heather Sparks

FROM: Kim Corbin-Leese, IRB Chair
      Trina M. Fox, IRB Administrator

SUBJECT: Facilitator Assessment Following a Stepfamily Education Course

Your proposal has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board and is approved under exemption #4.

X There is no more than minimal risk to the subjects.
    There is greater than minimal risk to the subjects.

This approval applies only to the proposal currently on file. Any change in the methods/objectives of the research affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. Injuries or any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the IRB Office (797-1821).

The research activities listed below are exempt based on the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) regulations for the protection of human research subjects, 45 CFR Part 46, as amended to include provisions of the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, June 18, 1991.

Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.